COLERIDGE

SELECT POEMS

S. G. DUNN

OXFORD
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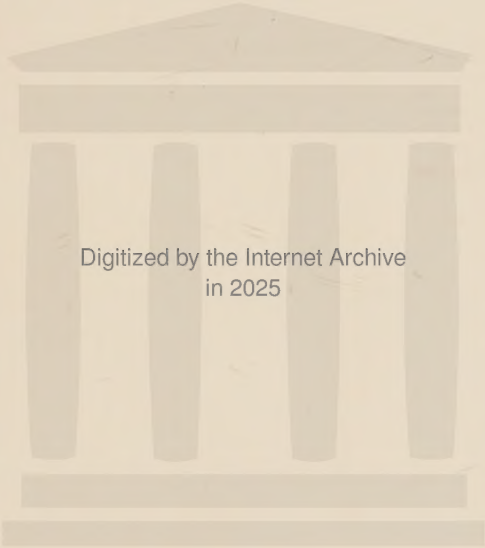

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

From a drawing by C. A. Leslie, R.A.

COLERIDGE

SELECT POEMS

CHOSEN AND EDITED

BY

S. G. DUNN, M.A.

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GENERAL PREFACE

WALTER PATER, advocating some forty years ago the making of an anthology of Wordsworth's poems, remarked in him the intrusion, from time to time, of 'something tedious and prosaic', and suggested that there is really in all poets a duality of higher and lower moods, a distinction between 'higher and lower degrees of intensity in the poet's perception of his subject and in his concentration of himself upon his work'. He goes on to tell us that it is requisite, in order to appreciate this distinction, to undergo 'a right discipline of the temper as well as of the intellect'. Those who have, by concentration and collectedness of mind, submitted to this discipline seem, he says, to have passed through a kind of initiation, the abiding effect of which is that they are able 'constantly to distinguish in art, speech, feeling, manners, that which is organic, animated, expressive, from that which is only conventional, derivative, inexpressive'

These words may serve to indicate the intention of the present editor in producing this series of selections, and to define his function in the work. It seems for many reasons desirable to publish thus, in convenient form, the best poetry of our English poets. There are many people in the modern world who have little time for reading, and they do not

wish to waste that time on what is 'only conventional, derivative, inexpressive'. It may be said, perhaps, that selection is necessary to all fruitful reading, and that the reader should be allowed to make his selection for himself. There are some, indeed, whose taste in literature is naturally sound; they turn instinctively to that which is beautiful and universal in the poets. But such sensitive spirits are few, and fewer still are those in whom training and study, observation and experience, do not quicken and develop the innate artistic sense. The young, especially, are apt to be bored by the 'tedious and prosaic' pages which exist in every poet's work, and to give up prematurely what seems to them an unpleasurable pastime. It is the business of the editor to clear away this rubbish. The poets are the best company in the world; but they are not always at their best, and we need an introduction to their society at the right moment. Once the introduction is made, the reader may be left to continue the acquaintance for himself.

There is also the perpetual presence in our midst of the educator and the examiner. These must have selections to work with. They cannot demand from the student a knowledge of the whole of Tennyson or of Wordsworth, much as they may desire that he will in time become acquainted with those authors in their entirety, but they do ask that the student shall know enough of an author to comprehend his attitude towards life and art; and this cannot be attained by making use of anthologies compiled from many authors,

admirable as these anthologies so often are. For academic purposes some such series as this seemed to be necessary; but it will carry an appeal, we trust, beyond these and meet a wider demand.

For some time there has been evident, in England as elsewhere, an increasing distrust of modern civilization. The huge frame of it, we feel, is not 'constructed right'. We have sought our happiness in material wealth; we have looked for peace from industrial prosperity; and the result of our endeavours has been not peace, but war. In the present crisis much of the unrest which was so disconcerting has vanished; many of our values have been transformed. Instead of accumulating money we are spending it; instead of hoarding up life we are giving it freely. There is a danger that when the crisis is over we may forget the lesson of these strenuous days and lose sight of those 'household fountains' which are the real springs of national character. We need to remember that the soul of a nation, the true ideals of its civilization, are expressed in its poetry; that the poets are the legislators, though 'unacknowledged', of mankind. 'We want', as Shelley says, 'the poetry of life.' Without that, the ceaseless movement of the modern world becomes 'but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns'. The war now raging in Europe has awakened us all from our illusions, and has shown us this at least, that men are not dead, as cynics thought, to ideals, nor unmoved by moral aims. We realize now, as Wordsworth told the

England of the Napoleonic struggle, that 'There is a spiritual community binding together the living and the dead, the good, the brave, and the wise of all ages'. All poetry is the attempt to express the ideas of that 'spiritual community', and according to our love and understanding of poetry will be our perception of the reality and efficacy of those ideas.

For those who believe this, here is offered the material for their study. But one warning must be uttered with regard to their use of that material and to their expectation of the good to be gained from it. 'I remember', says Steele in one of his papers for the *Tatler*, 'to have heard a great painter say, "There are certain faces for certain painters as well as certain subjects for certain poets." This is as true in the choice of studies; and no one will ever relish an author thoroughly well, who would not have been fit company for that author had they lived at the same time.' Much depends, that is to say, upon temperament. We cannot all appreciate the same things or the same poets. Temperament decides our friendships in living society; it is to temperament that we must look for the basis of our literary predilections. But, even so, as the words quoted at the beginning of this preface remind us, it is possible to train the temper as well as the intellect. To one who finds little that appeals to him in some poet we would suggest, 'Try and fit yourself for his company.' Failure to understand or to appreciate is often due, not to incompatibility

of temperament, but to lack of experience. Leslie Stephen, writing to a friend, after the death of his wife, remarks, 'Do you sympathize with me when I say that the only writer whom I have been able to read with pleasure through this nightmare is Wordsworth? I used not to care for him specially, but now I love him. He is so thoroughly manly and tender and honest, as far as his lights go, that he seems to me to be the only consoler.' Let no one, then, be discouraged if, at first, the deeper meaning of the poets seems to elude him. There will come a time, when life, the teacher of all things, will reveal, by a sudden flash of pleasure or through the slow processes of pain, what once was hidden from our immaturity. In joy and in sorrow, be sure of it, we shall be glad of the company of the poets. And in those long tracts of our journey that are marked by neither in any great measure, it will be good for us to keep our eyes clear, our intellects alert, our sympathies warm with that 'admiration, hope, and love' by which all poetry lives.

In this series will be found, it is hoped, only what is 'organic, animated, expressive', in each of the poets selected. Only such notes have been added as seemed indispensable for an understanding of the poems. Critical introductions, it has been said, are the curse of modern editions; and there are so many excellent histories of English literature and so many monographs on the several poets that repetition may well be avoided. But for purposes of easy reference a table of important dates has been prefixed to each volume,

together with some exposition of the poet's attitude towards life as expressed in his poems. The editor has endeavoured throughout to keep in mind the words of Tennyson, ' Poetry is like shot silk with many glancing colours, and every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability and according to his sympathy with the poet.'

The text has been taken from the Oxford editions of the Oxford University Press, to the editors and publishers of which I desire to offer my thanks.

S. G. DUNN.

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INTRODUCTION

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on October 21, 1772, at Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire. The following are the dates of the most important events in his life and literary career:

1782. Enters Christ's Hospital, where the sonnets of William Lisle Bowles first win him to a love of poetry.
1791–4. An undergraduate at Jesus College, Cambridge.
1793. Short career in a cavalry regiment.
1794. Meets Southey. With him, under the influence of the French Revolution, plans the founding of an ideal commonwealth in America ('Pantisocracy').
1795. Marries Miss Sara Fricker.
1796. Publishes at Bristol *Poems on Various Subjects.*
1797. At Nether Stowey.
Second edition of poems.
Meets Wordsworth.
1797–9. Composes the best of his poetry.
1798. Publishes with Wordsworth *Lyrical Ballads.* Undertakes work as a Unitarian preacher, but gives it up on receipt of an annuity from the Wedgwoods.
Visits Germany.
1799. Joins the staff of *The Morning Post.*
1800. Removes to Keswick in the Lake District. Here his health fails and he takes to opium.
1804. Visits Malta for his health: becomes temporary Secretary to the Civil Commissioner, Malta.
1806. Returns to London.
1809. Publishes *The Friend.*
1811–14. Lectures in London and Bristol.
1816. Goes to live with Mr. Gillman at Highgate, in order to break off his habit of taking laudanum.
Publishes *Christabel.*
1817. Publishes poems under the title *Sibylline Leaves.*
Publishes *Biographia Literaria.*

1825. Publishes *Aids to Reflection*.
1828. Travels up the Rhine with the Wordsworths.
1834. Dies at Highgate, July 25.

Vision, Feeling, and Expression—these would seem to be the three qualities or powers essential to poetry, and in estimating the value of a poet we shall best proceed by determining the degree in which he possesses them, not in particular passages, nor in isolation each from each, but in his poetry as a whole, and in unity one with another.

Vision, the faculty of observation, is indispensable. Yet the rarity of the gift is too often forgotten. The trained hunter will be able to detect upon the hill-side, so bare apparently of all life, the moving ibex or the grazing stag. Even so the artist and the poet will perceive elements of beauty, colours and forms, in a landscape which to the ordinary man seems barren of all interest. It is astonishing how many people go about the world blind. They need the stimulus of a poet like Wordsworth, or a painter like Turner, to open their eyes. But this faculty alone will not suffice the poet. The pleasure it affords is, after all, transitory, and, in its essence, selfish. The memory, that 'inward eye', may preserve it for us beyond the moment of perception. But how comes it that we remember some impressions so vividly, while others, which seemed at the time equally significant, have faded quite away? More than mere vision is needed for abiding satisfaction. It is not the intensity of the pleasure that counts, but the mental attitude in which one meets it. Feeling, or, as Coleridge called it, imagination, the power of association, the play of thought upon the object, the sense of its significance for life—this it is that gives to the thing seen an existence beyond the moment and the individual. Wordsworth was emphatic upon this point:

> 'The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
> Do take a sober colouring from an eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.'

To Browning the scent of the 'warm evening ends' suggests the mental image of many who have wandered even as he among the fields of summer, glad in the companionship of their friends. Coleridge cries:

> 'Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
> Enveloping the Earth.'

The visible world has for the poet, in all its aspects, innumerable associations with the spiritual, and it is the 'human heart' which gives to scenes of beauty a loveliness more lasting and secure. This combination of feeling with vision results in a new creation. For the poet there is

> 'A new Earth and new Heaven,
> Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud.'

Yet the enjoyment of this new world is not complete till it is communicated. It is possible, indeed, to see and feel, and to be dumb. There must be many a 'mute inglorious Milton', but we do not, in the ordinary sense, call them poets. Expression, the instinct for form, the power over words, by which we can make others see and feel what we ourselves have seen and felt—that is the supreme gift of the poet. In its possession and exercise he has, perhaps, the highest joy of which human nature is capable; the diminution or the loss of it troubles him beyond the measure of other men's trials. Yet so difficult of analysis is this power of expression that not seldom a poet will fail to perceive that it has left him. For example, it has often been remarked that Wordsworth presents to the public with equal confidence his best and his worst work. That is because the vision and the feeling are real for him, but he has lost the power of showing them to others in all their beauty. Form and matter in poetry are inseparable; they constitute one living body; and if the expression does not exactly suit the needs of the thought, then the poetry dies as surely as the human being when the material organism breaks down.

This analogy will help us to understand how all these three faculties of the poet must be fused in one for the production of the highest poetry. If a man have vision without feeling, he will give us what we call purely descriptive poetry; if feeling without vision, thoughtful or philosophical poetry; if finally he possess the power of words but little else, then we have rhetoric.

During the few years when each of these faculties was at its flowering-time in Coleridge, he produced poetry of the highest order. Taking the *Ancient Mariner* as typical of his achievement, we may see how each of these gifts helps the others. It would be difficult to find a poem more full of 'vision'. It is a succession of clear pictures. But at the same time each of these pictures is permeated with feeling; each thing seen is connected with the emotions of the 'mariner'; we see them through the medium of his mind; we are watching, not events merely, but the development of a soul. Nor could we readily find a poem in which the language more exactly represents in motion and rhythm the shapes and sounds described. Coleridge was, above all things, what the psychologists call a visualist. His mind made pictures, as he himself tells us. His natural sensitiveness to outward impressions was increased by his habit of inducing dreams through the use of opium. Afterwards came the reaction—that deadness of feeling and blunting of perception which all physical excess inevitably brings with it. The result appears in the record of his tragedy, the ode *Dejection*. His theory of life, again, strengthened in him, as in Wordsworth, this tendency to look at all things with close attention. He was one of those for whom, in Gautier's words, the visible world does veritably exist—not, that is, as a mere pageant of material forms and colours, but as the manifestation, in and through these, of a real life with which man may come into communion, since it is ultimately of the same nature as his own.

'O! the one Life within us and abroad,'

he exclaims in the *Eolian Harp*.

For him the world was full of

> 'lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
> Of that eternal language, which thy God
> Utters, who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all, and all things in himself.'

This belief he had formed even in boyhood from his reading of the Greeks, mystical writers like Plotinus being especially congenial to him; and all that he learned subsequently from German philosophy did but strengthen his conviction of a 'soul in things'. He could never be content with the superficial observation of the school of Pope.

He had the eye of the artist, with all its fidelity to the finer shades of colour in nature, in his treatment of which he may be said to anticipate Turner. Take, for example, his description of the unripe flax,

> 'When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
> The level sunshine glimmers with green light;'

or of

> 'moonlight bushes,
> Whose dewy leaflets are but half-disclosed,'

or, again, of

> 'the western sky
> And its peculiar tint of yellow green'.

This feeling for colour shows itself throughout the *Ancient Mariner*:

> 'Beyond the shadow of the ship,
> I watched the water-snakes:
> They moved in tracks of shining white,
> And when they reared, the elfish light
> Fell off in hoary flakes.'

> 'And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
> As green as emerald.'

> 'About, about, in reel and rout
> The death-fires danced at night;
> The water, like a witch's oils,
> Burnt green, and blue and white.'

The poem is full of such clear pictures, and instances might be multiplied. His perception of sound is equally acute, and in his representation of it we find especially that combination of feeling and expression which we have noted as essential to true poetry.

> 'It ceased; yet still the sails made on
> A pleasant noise till noon,
> A noise like of a hidden brook
> In the leafy month of June,
> That to the sleeping woods all night
> Singeth a quiet tune.'

The lines suggest exactly the sound described, and induce just that feeling of quietness which is intended.

Again we may find analogies with the painter in the reproduction of movement or rest in objects. Both are conveyed in the following description of the ship:

> 'The Sun right up above the mast,
> Had fixed her to the ocean:
> But in a minute she 'gan stir
> With a short uneasy motion—
> Backwards and forwards half her length
> With a short uneasy motion.
>
> Then like a pawing horse let go,
> She made a sudden bound:
> It flung the blood into my head,
> And I fell down in a swound.'

For an impression of complete rest we may quote,

> 'The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
> That stands above the rock:
> The moonlight steeped in silentness
> The steady weathercock.'

To the scent of things also Coleridge is keenly alive. The primrose is 'a fragrant messenger of spring'; the dell 'Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate'. There are in his poetry numerous appeals to this, the most subtle of our

senses. Colour, sound, motion, scent—these are the main elements in our perception of things, and in his treatment of each of them Coleridge shows his power of 'vision'. Yet we never have from him mere 'description'. The landscape is always seen through the human atmosphere. Even in the supernatural poems the loveliness is never 'unearthly', and we are always in the presence of

'Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind'.

The 'shaping spirit of imagination' works upon the 'outward forms' and everything is seen in a 'fair luminous mist'. The ode *Dejection* should be carefully read in this connexion. In it we may find the secret of all true poetical composition—the 'fusion' of vision and feeling, of which we have spoken—and in it we may find, too, the reason for that decline in power which Coleridge deplores.

'I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!'

The poet has lost his power of apprehension, and is constrained to cry:

'Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may,
For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!
With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll.'

Nothing is more tragic than the life of Coleridge after that ode. The power had gone from him, and he knew it. He was always waiting for the troubling of the waters. 'If easy in my mind,' he wrote, 'I have no doubt either of the reawakening power or of the kindling inclination'; but the body never forgives, and he had drunk too deeply of 'the poisons of self-harm'. The power of expression, indeed, was his to the end, but the thought and feeling were too often vague and blurred. One remembers Carlyle's description of an interview with him: 'I was never so bethumped with words'; and the famous chapter in the *Life of Sterling* on the oracle of Highgate. Nevertheless, it was by this talk

and his prose books, such as *Biographia Literaria*, that he influenced his contemporaries even more than by his poems. And his influence was immense. His mind was essentially philosophic and he did much to spread a new interest in philosophy in England. It was he and Carlyle that introduced German thought and interpreted its idealism to English readers. Yet Coleridge was no mere adapter or borrower. He welcomed the metaphysical system of the Germans because it seemed to him to carry on and develop a strain of thought which had always been present in his own country. He found this strain especially in the divines and poets of the seventeenth century, a period which appealed to him, moreover, through the sonorous and stately prose which it produced. He was deeply read in the literature of that time. He made a special study of Donne, both in theology and in poetry; there was something that attracted him in the spirit in which Donne combined patristic tradition with the science and metaphysic of his own day. The same combination of old with new may be found in Coleridge. He endeavoured to reconcile the transcendental philosophy and Christianity. His attitude towards God and nature may be described by the word 'Panentheism', the meaning of which I have discussed in my introduction to the Wordsworth volume in this series. He believed, that is, in a spirit, life, or activity, operating everywhere, 'at once the Soul of each, and God of all'. The idea of personal immortality was essential to him, and if the speculations of philosophy threatened to undermine it, he made his final appeal to the Will, and to Faith, itself but 'an act of the Will'.

In his later years he clung more and more to the established forms of theology as found in the Church of England, and it was he who gave the impulse to that revival which led to the tracts of Pusey, Keble, and Newman, the principals of the 'Oxford' or 'Tractarian' Movement. And if we may find in his thought and writings the germs of that intellectual reconstruction of religion, we may attribute also to him many

of the springs of the practical social reform which Kingsley and Maurice preached. He asks, for instance :

> 'Was it right,
> While my unnumber'd brethren toil'd and bled,
> That I should dream away the entrusted hours
> On rose-leaf beds, pampering the coward heart
> With feelings all too delicate for use ? . . .
> I therefore go, and join head, heart, and hand
> Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight
> Of Science, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ.'

These words, written in 1795, express the very spirit of the reformers of fifty years later. His particular schemes—Pantisocracy and the rest of them—came, it is true, to nothing, but we should not, for that reason, minimize the influence of Coleridge in stimulating thought and inspiring reform in the political and social world.

In criticism, especially, the work of Coleridge amounted almost to a revolution of method. This is not the place to discuss as fully as the subject demands his position as a critic, but the student should certainly refer to the selection of literary criticism by Coleridge contained in the volume edited by Professor Mackail and published by the Oxford University Press. He was, in fact, the initiator of Romantic Criticism—that is, he was one of the first critics honestly to attempt to judge a work of art in the light of the principles on which it was constructed and to ask himself not 'Does it conform to certain rules laid down by previous authorities ?' but 'Is it self-consistent, true, and vital ?' His criticism of Wordsworth is an 'appreciation' in the real sense; he sets himself to examine the objects proposed by the author, the methods by which he tries to attain those objects, and the measure of success he may be said to have secured. The result of such criticism is that it enables us better to understand the attitude of an author, even though we may not agree with it. This is very different from the criticism then in fashion, the slashing method of the *Edinburgh Review*

against which Byron fulminated in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. It is due to Coleridge very largely that this old kind of criticism has almost disappeared, and that an author may expect to be judged on his own premises and by his own standards rather than by rules and principles which he does not acknowledge. Liberty of treatment and of ideals is essential to the artist, and Coleridge recognized this fully when his contemporaries did not. Subsequent criticism has gained in value and efficacy from the adoption of his methods, and Coleridge must take rank as the first of the modern school of critics.

When we come to consider what it is here more our business to consider, namely, his influence on poetry, the lines are more difficult to trace. Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Shelley—all these have had their followers, and we can point to clear influences flowing from each of them. His association with Wordsworth has, perhaps, helped to obscure the very real contributions to progress in the art of poetry which Coleridge made. That habit of writing with the eye on the object, and of extracting its meaning for humanity, he shared with Wordsworth, and the latter has been more potent in transmitting it to others. But there was one department in the new Romance which Coleridge made particularly his own, the treatment of the supernatural. The reaction from the easy, ordered life of the eighteenth century had set in when he began to write; the supernatural was being used in all sorts of ways to stimulate the public imagination. The tales of 'Monk' Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe were widely popular. In them the 'supernatural' takes a very material form; their haunting ghosts and blood-curdling tragedies force the attention like an earthquake or an explosion. When not grossly material, their apparitions are obviously unearthly and remote; they admit no doubt of their origin. Coleridge saw that there was a more subtle way of capturing the imagination. He proposed, as we know, in the *Lyrical Ballads* mainly to treat supernatural subjects. 'It was

agreed', he says, 'that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or, at least, romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith.' He was by temperament fitted for the task. The words of Burnet which he placed at the head of his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* would not be inappropriate from his own lips. He could 'easily believe that there are more invisible than visible beings in the universe'. He was in sympathy with the men of ancient times for whom the world was full of spirits, invisible agencies of good or evil, passing in and out of the lives of men. In that frame of mind, the mood of the dreamer, he composed the *Rime* and *Christabel*, and in the latter especially he struck out a new treatment of the supernatural. There is little visibly awful in the mysterious visitant in *Christabel*; none of the conventional signs of terror are present in the picture. And yet the effect is all the more enthralling because it is in the mind, psychical. Little things that might pass almost unnoticed thrill us with the sense of danger; the low moan, the gems entangled in the hair, the faint sweet voice—there is nothing abnormal in them, and yet they are 'frightful'. In the same way the steps 'that strove to be, and were not, fast'; the sudden silent opening of the door; the sinking down upon the threshold; the 'fit of flame' as the lady passes the dying fire; all these happenings might be but coincidences, and yet we are made to feel that they are not, that they are directly connected with the presence of something evil, and point to some horror yet to be revealed. We have only to compare *Christabel* with the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* to see the difference in treatment, and there can be no question which is the more artistic.

Now in thus dealing with the supernatural in the spirit of psychology rather than of melodrama, Coleridge was opening

up a new and rich literary vein. If we examine the modern 'ghost' story, so different in its subtle suggestion from the 'clanking chain' type of the past, we may trace the influence of Coleridge. No one can read the *Rime* without doubting —for a moment only, it may be—the comfortable fabric of materialism, or wondering what strange things may not happen to a soul 'alone on a wide wide sea' of life whose margins we know not, nor can conjecture. The supernatural, the marvellous, the romantic—these seemed to Coleridge fit subjects for a poet, not on their own account so much, or for the value of the thrill and the excitement of them, as for the sense of an abiding mystery in things which they awaken in the contemplative mind. The whole tale of the *Mariner* ends not in blank wonder at the strange things that may happen to men on distant seas, as in other hands it might have done, but in a quickened feeling of the fellowship of all living beings in a world where actions and events are associated beyond our thought.

> 'He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.'

The moral is the same as that taught by Wordsworth in *Hart-leap Well*:

> 'The Being that is in the clouds and air,
> That is in the green leaves among the groves,
> Maintains a deep and reverential care
> For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.'

The lineal descendant of Coleridge among modern poets is George Meredith. The difference between them is the measure of our advance in science, a difference of degree rather than of kind. There is the same delight in nature, the same attempt to read the ways of earth by means of brain, the same conviction that somehow love is the basis of the scheme, the same belief in the ultimate 'blossom of

good'. The 'good physician Melampus' has learned by the investigations of science the same lesson as the 'Mariner' learned by suffering; and the latest researches into the nature of physical energy have brought us back to the

> 'one Life within us and abroad,
> Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where.'

Donne, Coleridge, and Meredith form a class by themselves, separated from the other poets by their greater interest in science and speculation. The term 'metaphysical' ordinarily applied to them is misleading, for it suggests a turning away from the material and visible world, whereas each of them is a close observer and accurate recorder of natural phenomena; but if it be taken to imply a strong psychological interest in those phenomena and an attempt to estimate their value and significance for man, then the term will do well enough. But in the technical details of his art Coleridge was the greatest of the three. His numerous experiments in metre have suggested developments, such as the unrhymed verse, which have recently become popular with our poets. We may deplore the wasted years when his genius was prostrate; but we should remember that his promise was not unfulfilled, and that no poet has produced anything containing more of the essential qualities of poetry than *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*. We may fitly conclude by applying to Coleridge the words which Johnson used of Goldsmith, 'Let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very great man'.

SELECT POEMS

BY

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

I

SONNET TO THE REV. W. L. BOWLES

My heart has thank'd thee, Bowles! for those soft strains
  Whose sadness soothes me, like the murmuring
  Of wild bees in the sunny showers of spring!
For hence not callous to the mourner's pains

Through Youth's gay prime and thornless paths I went:
  And when the mightier Throes of mind began,
  And drove me forth, a thought-bewilder'd man,
Their mild and manliest melancholy lent

A mingled charm, such as the pang consign'd
  To slumber, though the big tear it renew'd;
  Bidding a strange mysterious Pleasure brood
Over the wavy and tumultuous mind,

As the great Spirit erst with plastic sweep
Mov'd on the darkness of the unform'd deep

II

THE EOLIAN HARP

COMPOSED AT CLEVEDON, SOMERSETSHIRE

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown
With white-flower'd Jasmin, and the broad-leav'd Myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such should Wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatch'd from yon bean-field! and the world *so* hush'd!
The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
Tells us of silence.

And that simplest Lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caress'd,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfins make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,

Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untam'd wing!
O! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so fill'd;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

And thus, my Love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-clos'd eye-lids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
Full many a thought uncall'd and undetain'd,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject Lute!

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O belovéd Woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallow'd dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek Daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily disprais'd

These shapings of the unregenerate mind ;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible ! save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly *feels* ;
Who with his saving mercies healéd me,
A sinful and most miserable man,
Wilder'd and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honour'd Maid !

III

SONNET

TO A FRIEND WHO ASKED, HOW I FELT WHEN THE NURSE FIRST PRESENTED MY INFANT TO ME

Charles ! my slow heart was only sad, when first
I scann'd that face of feeble infancy :
For dimly on my thoughtful spirit burst
All I had been, and all my child might be !
But when I saw it on its mother's arm,
And hanging at her bosom (she the while
Bent o'er its features with a tearful smile)
Then I was thrill'd and melted, and most warm
Impress'd a father's kiss : and all beguil'd
Of dark remembrance and presageful fear,
I seem'd to see an angel-form appear—
'Twas even thine, belovéd woman mild !
So for the mother's sake the child was dear,
And dearer was the mother for the child.

IV

THIS LIME-TREE BOWER MY PRISON

In the June of 1797 some long-expected friends paid a visit to the author's cottage; and on the morning of their arrival, he met with an accident, which disabled him from walking during the whole time of their stay. One evening, when they had left him for a few hours, he composed the following lines in the garden-bower.

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimm'd mine eyes to blindness! They meanwhile,
Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,
Unsunn'd and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fann'd by the water-fall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.

Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide Heaven—and view again

The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hunger'd after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity! Ah! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
And kindle, thou blue Ocean! So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence.

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd
Much that has sooth'd me. Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watch'd
Some broad and sunny leaf, and lov'd to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above

Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
Was richly ting'd, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
Yet still the solitary humble-bee
Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! deeming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
Had cross'd the mighty Orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or, when all was still,
Flew creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

V

NATURE'S SOOTHING HAND

(*The Dungeon*, ll. 20–30).

With other ministrations thou, O Nature!
Healest thy wandering and distemper'd child:
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets,
Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters,
Till he relent, and can no more endure
To be a jarring and a dissonant thing,
Amid this general dance and minstrelsy;
But, bursting into tears, wins back his way,
His angry spirit heal'd and harmoniz'd
By the benignant touch of Love and Beauty.

VI

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS

ARGUMENT

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.

Part I

An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one.

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the line.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music; but the Mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole.

'And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

The land of ice, and of fearful sounds where no living thing was to be seen.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around :
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound !

ill a great
ea-bird,
alled the
lbatross,
ame through
ne snow-fog,
nd was
ceived with
reat joy and
ospitality.

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came ;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;
The helmsman steered us through !

nd lo ! the
lbatross
roveth a bird
f good omen,
nd followeth
ne ship as it
turned
orthward
hrough fog
nd floating
e.

And a good south wind sprung up behind ;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo !

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine ;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

he ancient
ariner
hospitably
lleth the
ous bird of
ood omen.

' God save thee, ancient Mariner !
From the fiends, that plague thee thus !—
Why look'st thou so ? '—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

Part II

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist

The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither

And some in dreams assuréd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

Part III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could not laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
A flash of joy; Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

And horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun.

The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on board the skeleton ship.

Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate ?
And is that Woman all her crew ?
Is that a DEATH ? and are there two ?
Is DEATH that woman's mate ?

Like vessel, like crew !
Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship's crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner.

Her lips were red, *her* looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold :
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice ;
' The game is done ! I've won ! I've won ! '
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

The Sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out :
At one stride comes the dark ;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

At the rising of the Moon,

We listened and looked sideways up !
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip !
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white ;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornéd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after another,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

His shipmates drop down dead.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

But Life-in Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

Part IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him;

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm,

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth that *they* should live, and so many lie dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and every where the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charméd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty and their happiness.

He blesseth them in his heart.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The spell begins to break.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

Part V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blesséd ghost.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The bodies of the ship's crew are inspired and the ship moves on;

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee :
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner !'
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest !
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest :

But not by the souls of the men, nor by dæmons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast ;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun ;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing ;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning !

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute ;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome Spirit from the south-pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

The Polar Spirit's fellow-dæmons, the

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;

invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

Part VI

FIRST VOICE

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?'

SECOND VOICE

'Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go ;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see ! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance ; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure.

'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind ?'

SECOND VOICE

'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly ! more high, more high !
Or we shall be belated :
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

The supernatural motion is retarded ; the Mariner awakes, and his penance begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather :
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high ;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter :
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away :
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is finally expiated.

And now this spell was snapt : once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made :
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too :
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

And the ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country.

Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed
The light-house top I see ?
Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?
Is this mine own countree ?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

And appear in their own forms of light.

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

Part VII

The Hermit of the Wood,

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared : I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

Approacheth the ship with wonder.

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

The ship suddenly sinketh.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient Mariner earnestly entreateth the Hermit to shrieve him;

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?'

and the penance of life falls on him.

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land;

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

And to teach, by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth.

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

VII

CHRISTABEL

PREFACE

THE first part of the following poem was written in the year 1797, at Stowey, in the county of Somerset. The second part, after my return from Germany, in the year 1800, at Keswick, Cumberland. It is probable that if the poem had been finished at either of the former periods, or if even the first and second part had been published in the year 1800, the impression of its originality would have been much greater than I dare at present expect. But for this I have only my own indolence to blame. The dates are mentioned for the exclusive purpose of precluding charges of plagiarism or servile imitation from myself. For there is amongst us a set of critics, who seem to hold, that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man's tank. I am confident, however, that as far as the present poem is concerned, the celebrated poets whose writings I might be suspected of having imitated, either in particular passages, or in the tone and the spirit of the whole, would be among the first to vindicate me from the charge, and who, on any striking coincidence, would permit me to address them in this doggerel version of two monkish Latin hexameters.

> 'Tis mine and it is likewise yours;
> But an if this will not do;
> Let it be mine, good friend! for I
> Am the poorer of the two.

I have only to add that the metre of Christabel is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless, this occasional variation in number of

syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.

Part I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu—whit!——Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.
Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?

She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothéd knight ;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that 's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest misletoe :
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel !
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill ; the forest bare ;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak ?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel !
Jesu, Maria, shield her well !

She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

Mary mother, save me now!
(Said Christabel,) And who art thou?

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!
Said Christabel, How camest thou here?
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:

They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind.
They spurred amain, their steeds were white :
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be ;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced I wis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke :
He placed me underneath this oak ;
He swore they would return with haste ;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand (thus ended she),
And help a wretched maid to flee.

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,
And comforted fair Geraldine :
O well, bright dame ! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline ;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall.

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.

Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me.

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side,
Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!

Alas, alas! said Geraldine,
I cannot speak for weariness.
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel, the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
O softly tread, said Christabel,
My father seldom sleepeth well.

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And jealous of the listening air
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,

As still as death, with stifled breath !
And now have reached her chamber door ;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet :
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim ;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine !
It is a wine of virtuous powers ;
My mother made it of wild flowers.

And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn ?
Christabel answered—Woe is me !
She died the hour that I was born.

I have heard the grey-haired friar tell
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here
I would, said Geraldine, she were!

But soon with altered voice, said she—
'Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee.'
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?
And why with hollow voice cries she,
'Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me.'

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
Alas! said she, this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath wildered you!
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, 'tis over now!'

Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright:
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countrée.

And thus the lofty lady spake—
'All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie.'

Quoth Christabel, So let it be!
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close;
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side——
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly, as one defied,
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the Maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,
Ah well-a-day!
And with low voice and doleful look
These words did say:
'In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;
But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.'

The Conclusion to Part I

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.
Amid the jaggéd shadows
Of mossy leafless boughs,

Kneeling in the moonlight,
To make her gentle vows ;
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, oh call it fair not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me !)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is—
O sorrow and shame ! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree ?
And lo ! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine ! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine ! one hour was thine—
Thou'st had thy will ! By tairn and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still.
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower, tu—whoo ! tu—whoo !
Tu—whoo ! tu—whoo ! from wood and fell !

And see ! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance ;

Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.
And, if she move unquietly,
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free
Comes back and tingles in her feet.
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere,
What if she knew her mother near?
But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call:
For the blue sky bends over all!

Part II

Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
Knells us back to a world of death.
These words Sir Leoline first said,
When he rose and found his lady dead:
These words Sir Leoline will say
Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law began
That still at dawn the sacristan,

Who duly pulls the heavy bell,
Five and forty beads must tell
Between each stroke—a warning knell,
Which not a soul can choose but hear
From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

Saith Bracy the bard, So let it knell!
And let the drowsy sacristan
Still count as slowly as he can!
There is no lack of such, I ween,
As well fill up the space between.
In Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair,
And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,
With ropes of rock and bells of air
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,
Who all give back, one after t'other,
The death-note to their living brother;
And oft too, by the knell offended,
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,
The devil mocks the doleful tale
With a merry peal from Borodale.

The air is still! through mist and cloud
That merry peal comes ringing loud;
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,
And rises lightly from the bed;
Puts on her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,
And nothing doubting of her spell
Awakens the lady Christabel.
'Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?
I trust that you have rested well.'

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
O rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.
'Sure I have sinn'd!' said Christabel,
'Now heaven be praised if all be well!'
And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet
With such perplexity of mind
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed
Her maiden limbs, and having prayed
That He, who on the cross did groan,
Might wash away her sins unknown,
She forthwith led fair Geraldine
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

The lovely maid and the lady tall
Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom,
Enter the Baron's presence-room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,

With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies,
And gave such welcome to the same,
As might beseem so bright a dame!

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between;—
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face :
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.

O then the Baron forgot his age,
His noble heart swelled high with rage ;
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side
He would proclaim it far and wide,
With trump and solemn heraldry,
That they, who thus had wronged the dame,
Were base as spotted infamy !
' And if they dare deny the same,
My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek
My tourney court—that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls
From the bodies and forms of men ! '
He spake : his eye in lightning rolls !
For the lady was ruthlessly seized ; and he kenned
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend !

And now the tears were on his face,
And fondly in his arms he took
Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,
Prolonging it with joyous look.
Which when she viewed, a vision fell
Upon the soul of Christabel,
The vision of fear, the touch and pain !
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again—
(Ah, woe is me ! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid ! such sights to see ?)

Again she saw that bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:
Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,
And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

The touch, the sight, had passed away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest
While in the lady's arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,
And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light!
With new surprise,
'What ails then my belovéd child?'
The Baron said—His daughter mild
Made answer, 'All will yet be well!'
I ween, she had no power to tell
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,
Had deemed her sure a thing divine:
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
As if she feared she had offended
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!
And with such lowly tones she prayed
She might be sent without delay
Home to her father's mansion.
'Nay!
Nay, by my soul!' said Leoline.
'Ho! Bracy the bard, the charge be thine!

Go thou, with music sweet and loud,
And take two steeds with trappings proud,
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best
To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,
And clothe you both in solemn vest,
And over the mountains haste along,
Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,
Detain you on the valley road.

'And when he has crossed the Irthing flood,
My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes
Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood,
And reaches soon that castle good
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

'Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet,
Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet,
More loud than your horses' echoing feet!
And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,
Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall!
Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free—
Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me!
He bids thee come without delay
With all thy numerous array
And take thy lovely daughter home:
And he will meet thee on the way
With all his numerous array
White with their panting palfreys' foam:
And, by mine honour! I will say,
That I repent me of the day
When I spake words of fierce disdain
To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine!—

—For since that evil hour hath flown,
Many a summer's sun hath shone;
Yet ne'er found I a friend again
Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine.

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,
Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing;
And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,
His gracious Hail on all bestowing!—
'Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,
Are sweeter than my harp can tell;
Yet might I gain a boon of thee,
This day my journey should not be,
So strange a dream hath come to me,
That I had vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest,
Warned by a vision in my rest!
For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
And call'st by thy own daughter's name—
Sir Leoline! I saw the same
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wonder'd what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see,
Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old tree.

'And in my dream methought I went
To search out what might there be found;
And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.

I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry ;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo ! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck.
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched ;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers !
I woke ; it was the midnight hour,
The clock was echoing in the tower ;
But though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away—
It seems to live upon my eye !
And thence I vowed this self-same day
With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare,
Lest aught unholy loiter there.'

Thus Bracy said : the Baron, the while,
Half-listening heard him with a smile ;
Then turned to Lady Geraldine,
His eyes made up of wonder and love ;
And said in courtly accents fine,
' Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,
With arms more strong than harp or song,
Thy sire and I will crush the snake ! '
He kissed her forehead as he spake,
And Geraldine in maiden wise
Casting down her large bright eyes,

With blushing cheek and courtesy fine
She turned her from Sir Leoline;
Softly gathering up her train,
That o'er her right arm fell again;
And folded her arms across her chest,
And couched her head upon her breast,
And looked askance at Christabel——
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy;
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she looked askance!—
One moment—and the sight was fled!
But Christabel in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground
Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;
And Geraldine again turned round,
And like a thing, that sought relief,
Full of wonder and full of grief,
She rolled her large bright eyes divine
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees—no sight but one!
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
I know not how, in fearful wise,
So deeply had she drunken in
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind:

And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate!
And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
Still picturing that look askance
With forced unconscious sympathy
Full before her father's view——
As far as such a look could be
In eyes so innocent and blue!

And when the trance was o'er, the maid
Paused awhile, and inly prayed:
Then falling at the Baron's feet,
'By my mother's soul do I entreat
That thou this woman send away!'
She said: and more she could not say:
For what she knew she could not tell,
O'er-mastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,
Sir Leoline? Thy only child
Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,
So fair, so innocent, so mild;
The same, for whom thy lady died!
O by the pangs of her dear mother
Think thou no evil of thy child!
For her, and thee, and for no other,
She prayed the moment ere she died:
Prayed that the babe for whom she died,
Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!
That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
Sir Leoline!
And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
Her child and thine?

Within the Baron's heart and brain
If thoughts, like these, had any share,
They only swelled his rage and pain,
And did but work confusion there.
His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild.
Dishonoured thus in his old age;
Dishonoured by his only child,
And all his hospitality
To the wronged daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy
Brought thus to a disgraceful end—
He rolled his eye with stern regard
Upon the gentle minstrel bard,
And said in tones abrupt, austere—
'Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?
I bade thee hence!' The bard obeyed;
And turning from his own sweet maid,
The aged knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the lady Geraldine!

VIII

FROST AT MIDNIGHT

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.

'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, everywhere
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering *stranger*! and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,

Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the *stranger's* face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersèd vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth

With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

IX

LIBERTY

(*France: An Ode*, Stanza 1)

Ye Clouds! that far above me float and pause,
Whose pathless march no mortal may controul!
Ye Ocean-Waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,
Yield homage only to eternal laws!
Ye Woods! that listen to the night-birds singing,
Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,
Save when your own imperious branches swinging,
Have made a solemn music of the wind!
Where, like a man beloved of God,
Through glooms, which never woodman trod,
How oft, pursuing fancies holy,
My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
Inspired, beyond the guess of folly,
By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!
O ye loud Waves! and O ye Forests high!
And O ye Clouds that far above me soared!
Thou rising Sun! thou blue rejoicing Sky!

Yea, every thing that is and will be free !
Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
With what deep worship I have still adored
The spirit of divinest Liberty.

X

FEARS IN SOLITUDE

WRITTEN IN APRIL 1798, DURING THE ALARM OF AN INVASION

A GREEN and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell ! O'er stiller place
No singing sky-lark ever poised himself.
The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,
Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,
All golden with the never-bloomless furze,
Which now blooms most profusely : but the dell,
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As vernal corn-field, or the unripe flax,
When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
The level sunshine glimmers with green light.
Oh ! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook !
Which all, methinks, would love ; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise !
Here he might lie on fern or withered heath,
While from the singing lark (that sings unseen
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),
And from the sun, and from the breezy air,
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame ;

And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of Nature!
And so, his senses gradually wrapt
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark,
That singest like an angel in the clouds!

My God! it is a melancholy thing
For such a man, who would full fain preserve
His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel
For all his human brethren—O my God!
It weighs upon the heart, that he must think
What uproar and what strife may now be stirring
This way or that way o'er these silent hills—
Invasion, and the thunder and the shout,
And all the crash of onset; fear and rage,
And undetermined conflict—even now,
Even now, perchance, and in his native isle:
Carnage and groans beneath this blessed sun!

. . . . . .

O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely and all honourable things,
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being?

There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul
Unborrowed from my country! O divine
And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
And most magnificent temple, in the which
I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
Loving the God that made me!—

May my fears,
My filial fears, be vain! and may the vaunts
And menace of the vengeful enemy
Pass like the gust, that roared and died away
In the distant tree: which heard, and only heard
In this low dell, bowed not the delicate grass.

But now the gentle dew-fall sends abroad
The fruit-like perfume of the golden furze:
The light has left the summit of the hill,
Though still a sunny gleam lies beautiful,
Aslant the ivied beacon. Now farewell,
Farewell, awhile, O soft and silent spot!
On the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill,
Homeward I wind my way; and lo! recalled
From bodings that have well-nigh wearied me,
I find myself upon the brow, and pause
Startled! And after lonely sojourning
In such a quiet and surrounded nook,
This burst of prospect, here the shadowy main,
Dim-tinted, there the mighty majesty
Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
And elmy fields, seems like society—
Conversing with the mind, and giving it
A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!

And now, belovéd Stowey! I behold
Thy church-tower, and, methinks, the four huge elms
Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend;
And close behind them, hidden from my view,
Is my own lowly cottage, where my babe
And my babe's mother dwell in peace! With light
And quickened footsteps thitherward I tend,
Remembering thee, O green and silent dell!
And grateful, that by nature's quietness
And solitary musings, all my heart
Is softened, and made worthy to indulge
Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind.

XI

THE NIGHTINGALE

A CONVERSATION POEM, APRIL 1798

No cloud, no relique of the sunken day
Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip
Of sullen light, no obscure trembling hues.
Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge!
You see the glimmer of the stream beneath,
But hear no murmuring: it flows silently,
O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,
A balmy night! and though the stars be dim,
Yet let us think upon the vernal showers
That gladden the green earth, and we shall find
A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.
And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,
'Most musical, most melancholy' bird!

A melancholy bird? Oh! idle thought!
In Nature there is nothing melancholy.
But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced
With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,
Or slow distemper, or neglected love,
(And so, poor wretch! filled all things with himself,
And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
Of his own sorrow) he, and such as he,
First named these notes a melancholy strain.
And many a poet echoes the conceit;
Poet who hath been building up the rhyme
When he had better far have stretched his limbs
Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell,
By sun or moon-light, to the influxes
Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements
Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song
And of his fame forgetful! so his fame
Should share in Nature's immortality,
A venerable thing! and so his song
Should make all Nature lovelier, and itself
Be loved like Nature! But 'twill not be so;
And youths and maidens most poetical,
Who lose the deepening twilights of the spring
In ball-rooms and hot theatres, they still
Full of meek sympathy must heave their sighs
O'er Philomela's pity-pleading strains.

My Friend, and thou, our Sister! we have learnt
A different lore: we may not thus profane
Nature's sweet voices, always full of love
And joyance! 'Tis the merry Nightingale

That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul
Of all its music!

And I know a grove
Of large extent, hard by a castle huge,
Which the great lord inhabits not; and so
This grove is wild with tangling underwood,
And the trim walks are broken up, and grass,
Thin grass and king-cups grow within the paths.
But never elsewhere in one place I knew
So many nightingales; and far and near,
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,
They answer and provoke each other's song,
With skirmish and capricious passagings,
And murmurs musical and swift jug jug,
And one low piping sound more sweet than all—
Stirring the air with such a harmony,
That should you close your eyes, you might almost
Forget it was not day! On moonlight bushes,
Whose dewy leaflets are but half-disclosed,
You may perchance behold them on the twigs,
Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,
Glistening, while many a glow-worm in the shade
Lights up her love-torch.

A most gentle Maid,
Who dwelleth in her hospitable home
Hard by the castle, and at latest eve

(Even like a Lady vowed and dedicate
To something more than Nature in the grove)
Glides through the pathways ; she knows all their notes,
That gentle Maid ! and oft, a moment's space,
What time the moon was lost behind a cloud,
Hath heard a pause of silence ; till the moon
Emerging, hath awakened earth and sky
With one sensation, and those wakeful birds
Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,
As if some sudden gale had swept at once
A hundred airy harps ! And she hath watched
Many a nightingale perch giddily
On blossomy twig still swinging from the breeze,
And to that motion tune his wanton song
Like tipsy Joy that reels with tossing head.

Farewell, O Warbler ! till to-morrow eve,
And you, my friends ! farewell, a short farewell !
We have been loitering long and pleasantly,
And now for our dear homes.—That strain again !
Full fain it would delay me ! My dear babe,
Who, capable of no articulate sound,
Mars all things with his imitative lisp,
How he would place his hand beside his ear,
His little hand, the small forefinger up,
And bid us listen ! And I deem it wise
To make him Nature's play-mate. He knows well
The evening-star ; and once, when he awoke
In most distressful mood (some inward pain
Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream—)
I hurried with him to our orchard-plot,

And he beheld the moon, and, hushed at once,
Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently,
While his fair eyes, that swam with undropped tears,
Did glitter in the yellow moon-beam! Well!—
It is a father's tale: But if that Heaven
Should give me life, his childhood shall grow up
Familiar with these songs, that with the night
He may associate joy.—Once more, farewell,
Sweet Nightingale! once more, my friends! farewell.

XII

KUBLA KHAN

THE following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity [Lord Byron], and, as far as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits.

In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm-house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in *Purchas's Pilgrimage*: 'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed with a wall.' The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the

lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter!

As a contrast to this vision, I have annexed a fragment of a very different character, describing with equal fidelity the dream of pain and disease.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
  Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail :
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean :
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war !
  The shadow of the dome of pleasure
  Floated midway on the waves ;
  Where was heard the mingled measure
  From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice !

  A damsel with a dulcimer
  In a vision once I saw :
  It was an Abyssinian maid,
  And on her dulcimer she played,
  Singing of Mount Abora.
  Could I revive within me
  Her symphony and song,
  To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !
His flashing eyes, his floating hair !

Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

XIII

THE PAINS OF SLEEP

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
It hath not been my use to pray
With moving lips or bended knees ;
But silently, by slow degrees,
My spirit I to Love compose,
In humble trust mine eye-lids close,
With reverential resignation,
No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
Only a sense of supplication ;
A sense o'er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, every where
Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.

But yester-night I prayed aloud
In anguish and in agony,
Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me :
A lurid light, a trampling throng,
Sense of intolerable wrong,
And whom I scorned, those only strong !
Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
Still baffled, and yet burning still !

Desire with loathing strangely mixed
On wild or hateful objects fixed.
Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!
And shame and terror over all!
Deeds to be hid which were not hid,
Which all confused I could not know
Whether I suffered, or I did:
For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe,
My own or others still the same
Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.

So two nights passed: the night's dismay
Saddened and stunned the coming day.
Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
Distemper's worst calamity.
The third night, when my own loud scream
Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
I wept as I had been a child;
And having thus by tears subdued
My anguish to a milder mood,
Such punishments, I said, were due
To natures deepliest stained with sin,—
For aye entempesting anew
The unfathomable hell within,
The horror of their deeds to view,
To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
Such griefs with such men well agree,
But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
To be beloved is all I need,
And whom I love, I love indeed.

XIV

ON A CATARACT

FROM A CAVERN NEAR THE SUMMIT OF A MOUNTAIN PRECIPICE

STROPHE

Unperishing youth!
Thou leapest from forth
The cell of thy hidden nativity;
Never mortal saw
The cradle of the strong one;
Never mortal heard
The gathering of his voices;
The deep-murmured charm of the son of the rock,
That is lisp'd evermore at his slumberless fountain.
There 's a cloud at the portal, a spray-woven veil
At the shrine of his ceaseless renewing;
It embosoms the roses of dawn,
It entangles the shafts of the noon,
And into the bed of its stillness
The moonshine sinks down as in slumber,
That the son of the rock, that the nursling of heaven
May be born in a holy twilight!

ANTISTROPHE

The wild goat in awe
Looks up and beholds
Above thee the cliff inaccessible;—
Thou at once full-born
Madd'nest in thy joyance,
Whirlest, shatter'st, splitt'st,
Life invulnerable.

XV

SOMETHING CHILDISH, BUT VERY NATURAL

If I had but two little wings
And were a little feathery bird,
To you I'd fly, my dear!
But thoughts like these are idle things,
And I stay here.

But in my sleep to you I fly:
I'm always with you in my sleep!
The world is all one's own.
But then one wakes, and where am I?
All, all alone.

Sleep stays not, though a monarch bids:
So I love to wake ere break of day:
For though my sleep be gone,
Yet while 'tis dark, one shuts one's lids,
And still dreams on.

XVI

HOME-SICK

'Tis sweet to him who all the week
Through city-crowds must push his way,
To stroll alone through fields and woods,
And hallow thus the Sabbath-day.

And sweet it is, in summer bower,
Sincere, affectionate and gay,
One's own dear children feasting round,
To celebrate one's marriage-day.

But what is all to his delight,
Who having long been doomed to roam,
Throws off the bundle from his back,
Before the door of his own home ?

Home-sickness is a wasting pang ;
This feel I hourly more and more :
There 's healing only in thy wings,
Thou breeze that play'st on Albion's shore !

XVII

LINES WRITTEN IN THE ALBUM AT ELBINGERODE IN THE HARTZ FOREST

I stood on Brocken's sovran height, and saw
Woods crowding upon woods, hills over hills,
A surging scene, and only limited
By the blue distance. Heavily my way
Downward I dragged through fir groves evermore,
Where bright green moss heaves in sepulchral forms
Speckled with sunshine ; and, but seldom heard,
The sweet bird's song became a hollow sound ;
And the breeze, murmuring indivisibly,
Preserved its solemn murmur most distinct
From many a note of many a waterfall,
And the brook's chatter ; 'mid whose islet-stones
The dingy kidling with its tinkling bell
Leaped frolicsome, or old romantic goat
Sat, his white beard slow waving. I moved on
In low and languid mood : for I had found

That outward forms, the loftiest, still receive
Their finer influence from the Life within ;—
Fair cyphers else : fair, but of import vague
Or unconcerning, where the heart not finds
History or prophecy of friend, or child,
Or gentle maid, our first and early love,
Or father, or the venerable name
Of our adoréd country ! O thou Queen,
Thou delegated Deity of Earth,
O dear, dear England ! how my longing eye
Turned westward, shaping in the steady clouds
Thy sands and high white cliffs !

My native Land !
Filled with the thought of thee this heart was proud,
Yea, mine eye swam with tears : that all the view
From sovran Brocken, woods and woody hills,
Floated away, like a departing dream,
Feeble and dim ! Stranger, these impulses
Blame thou not lightly ; nor will I profane,
With hasty judgement or injurious doubt,
That man's sublimer spirit, who can feel
That God is everywhere ! the God who framed
Mankind to be one mighty family,
Himself our Father, and the World our Home.

XVIII

LOVE

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay,
Beside the ruined tower.

The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene
Had blended with the lights of eve;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve!

She leant against the armèd man,
The statue of the armèd knight;
She stood and listened to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,
My hope! my joy! my Genevieve!
She loves me best, whene'er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story—
An old rude song, that suited well
That ruin wild and hoary.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace;
For well she knew, I could not choose
But gaze upon her face.

I told her of the Knight that wore
Upon his shield a burning brand;
And that for ten long years he wooed
The Lady of the Land.

I told her how he pined: and ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another's love,
Interpreted my own.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes, and modest grace;
And she forgave me, that I gazed
Too fondly on her face!

But when I told the cruel scorn
That crazed that bold and lovely Knight,
And that he crossed the mountain-woods,
Nor rested day nor night;

That sometimes from the savage den,
And sometimes from the darksome shade,
And sometimes starting up at once
In green and sunny glade,—

There came and looked him in the face
An angel beautiful and bright;
And that he knew it was a Fiend,
This miserable Knight!

And that unknowing what he did,
He leaped amid a murderous band,
And saved from outrage worse than death
The Lady of the Land!

And how she wept, and clasped his knees;
And how she tended him in vain—
And ever strove to expiate
The scorn that crazed his brain;—

And that she nursed him in a cave;
And how his madness went away,
When on the yellow forest-leaves
A dying man he lay;—

His dying words—but when I reached
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My faultering voice and pausing harp
Disturbed her soul with pity!

All impulses of soul and sense
Had thrilled my guileless Genevieve;
The music and the doleful tale,
The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long!

She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love, and virgin-shame;
And like the murmur of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heaved—she stepped aside,
As conscious of my look she stepped—
Then suddenly, with timorous eye
She fled to me and wept.

She half enclosed me with her arms,
She pressed me with a meek embrace;
And bending back her head, looked up,
And gazed upon my face.

'Twas partly love, and partly fear,
And partly 'twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel, than see,
The swelling of her heart.

I calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous Bride.

XIX

A THOUGHT SUGGESTED BY A VIEW OF SADDLEBACK IN CUMBERLAND

On stern Blencartha's perilous height
The winds are tyrannous and strong;
And flashing forth unsteady light
From stern Blencartha's skiey height,
As loud the torrents throng!
Beneath the moon, in gentle weather,
They bind the earth and sky together.
But oh! the sky and all its forms, how quiet!
The things that seek the earth, how full of noise and riot!

XX

THE SECOND BIRTH

THERE are two births, the one when Light
First strikes the new-awaken'd sense—
The other when two souls unite,
And we must count our life from then.

When you lov'd me, and I lov'd you,
Then both of us were born anew.

XXI

TO ——

I MIX in life, and labour to seem free,
With common persons pleas'd and common things,
While every thought and action tends to thee,
And every impulse from thy influence springs.

XXII

AN ANGEL VISITANT

WITHIN these circling hollies woodbine-clad—
Beneath this small blue roof of vernal sky—
How warm, how still! Tho' tears should dim mine eye,
Yet will my heart for days continue glad,
For here, my love, thou art, and here am I!

XXIII

DEJECTION: AN ODE

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.
Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence.

I

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far were mute.
For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

V

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

VI

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

VII

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,

Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
With groans, of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay,—
'Tis of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

VIII

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!

With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

XXIV

HYMN BEFORE SUN-RISE, IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI

Hast thou a charm to stay the morning-star
In his steep course? So long he seems to pause
On thy bald awful head, O sovran Blanc,
The Arve and Arveiron at thy base
Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful Form!
Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,
How silently! Around thee and above
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
An ebon mass: methinks thou piercest it,
As with a wedge! But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity!
O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my Thought,
Yea, with my Life and Life's own secret joy:
Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing—there
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven!

Awake, my soul! not only passive praise
Thou owest! not alone these swelling tears,
Mute thanks and secret ecstasy! Awake,
Voice of sweet song! Awake, my heart, awake!
Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my Hymn.

Thou first and chief, sole sovereign of the Vale!
O struggling with the darkness all the night,
And visited all night by troops of stars,
Or when they climb the sky or when they sink:
Companion of the morning-star at dawn,
Thyself Earth's rosy star, and of the dawn
Co-herald: wake, O wake, and utter praise!
Who sank thy sunless pillars deep in Earth?
Who filled thy countenance with rosy light?
Who made thee parent of perpetual streams?

And you, ye five wild torrents fiercely glad!
Who called you forth from night and utter death,
From dark and icy caverns called you forth,
Down those precipitous, black, jaggéd rocks,
For ever shattered and the same for ever?
Who gave you your invulnerable life,

Your strength, your speed, your fury, and your joy,
Unceasing thunder and eternal foam ?
And who commanded (and the silence came),
Here let the billows stiffen, and have rest ?

Ye Ice-falls ! ye that from the mountain's brow
Adown enormous ravines slope amain—
Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge !
Motionless torrents ! silent cataracts !
Who made you glorious as the Gates of Heaven
Beneath the keen full moon ? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows ? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet ?—
God ! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
Answer ! and let the ice-plains echo, God !
God ! sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice !
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds !
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God !

Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost !
Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest !
Ye eagles, play-mates of the mountain-storm !
Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds !
Ye signs and wonders of the element !
Utter forth God, and fill the hills with praise !

Thou too, hoar Mount ! with thy sky-pointing peaks,
Oft from whose feet the avalanche, unheard,
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure serene
Into the depth of clouds, that veil thy breast—

Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,
To rise before me—Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense from the Earth!
Thou kingly Spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great Hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.

XXV

INSCRIPTION FOR A FOUNTAIN ON A HEATH

This Sycamore, oft musical with bees,—
Such tents the Patriarchs loved! O long unharmed
May all its agéd boughs o'er-canopy
The small round basin, which this jutting stone
Keeps pure from falling leaves! Long may the Spring,
Quietly as a sleeping infant's breath,
Send up cold waters to the traveller
With soft and even pulse! Nor ever cease
Yon tiny cone of sand its soundless dance,
Which at the bottom, like a Fairy's Page,
As merry and no taller, dances still,
Nor wrinkles the smooth surface of the Fount.

Here Twilight is and Coolness : here is moss,
A soft seat, and a deep and ample shade.
Thou may'st toil far and find no second tree.
Drink, Pilgrim, here ; Here rest ! and if thy heart
Be innocent, here too shalt thou refresh
Thy spirit, listening to some gentle sound,
Or passing gale or hum of murmuring bees !

XXVI

TO NATURE

It may indeed be phantasy, when I
  Essay to draw from all created things
  Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings ;
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie
Lessons of love and earnest piety.
  So let it be ; and if the wide world rings
  In mock of this belief, it brings
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.
So will I build my altar in the fields,
  And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields
  Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,
Thee only God ! and thou shalt not despise
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.

XXVII

YOUTH AND AGE

Verse, a breeze mid blossoms straying,
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—
Both were mine! Life went a-maying
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,
When I was young!

When I was young?—Ah, woful When!
Ah! for the change 'twixt Now and Then!
This breathing house not built with hands,
This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands,
How lightly then it flashed along:—
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide!
Nought cared this body for wind or weather
When Youth and I lived in't together.

Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;
Friendship is a sheltering tree;
O! the joys, that came down shower-like,
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,
Ere I was old!

Ere I was old? Ah woful Ere,
Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!

O Youth! for years so many and sweet,
'Tis known, that Thou and I were one,
I'll think it but a fond conceit—
It cannot be that Thou art gone!
Thy vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd:—
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on,
To make believe, that thou art gone?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size:
But Spring-tide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but thought: so think I will
That Youth and I are house-mates still.

Dew-drops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve!
Where no hope is, life 's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve,
When we are old:

That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave,
Like some poor nigh-related guest,
That may not rudely be dismist;
Yet hath outstay'd his welcome while,
And tells the jest without the smile.

XXVIII

WORK WITHOUT HOPE

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—
The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—
And Winter slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!
And I the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may,
For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!
With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll:
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?
Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And Hope without an object cannot live.

XXIX

A TOMBLESS EPITAPH

'Tis true, Idoloclastes Satyrane!
(So call him, for so mingling blame with praise,
And smiles with anxious looks, his earliest friends,
Masking his birth-name, wont to character

His wild-wood fancy and impetuous zeal,)
'Tis true that, passionate for ancient truths,
And honouring with religious love the Great
Of elder times, he hated to excess,
With an unquiet and intolerant scorn,
The hollow Puppets of a hollow Age,
Ever idolatrous, and changing ever
Its worthless Idols! Learning, Power, and Time,
(Too much of all) thus wasting in vain war
Of fervid colloquy. Sickness, 'tis true,
Whole years of weary days, besieged him close,
Even to the gates and inlets of his life!
But it is true, no less, that strenuous, firm,
And with a natural gladness, he maintained
The citadel unconquered, and in joy
Was strong to follow the delightful Muse.
For not a hidden path, that to the shades
Of the beloved Parnassian forest leads,
Lurked undiscovered by him; not a rill
There issues from the fount of Hippocrene,
But he had traced it upward to its source,
Through open glade, dark glen, and secret dell,
Knew the gay wild flowers on its banks, and culled
Its med'cinable herbs. Yea, oft alone,
Piercing the long-neglected holy cave,
The haunt obscure of old Philosophy,
He bade with lifted torch its starry walls
Sparkle, as erst they sparkled to the flame
Of odorous lamps tended by Saint and Sage.
O framed for calmer times and nobler hearts!
O studious Poet, eloquent for truth!

Philosopher! contemning wealth and death,
Yet docile, childlike, full of Life and Love!
Here, rather than on monumental stone,
This record of thy worth thy Friend inscribes,
Thoughtful, with quiet tears upon his cheek.

NOTES

I

The Rev. William Lisle Bowles (1762–1850) published in 1789 a volume entitled *Fourteen Sonnets*, to which he added in subsequent editions. Coleridge, as a schoolboy of seventeen, came across the book and was charmed with it. From the reading of it he dates the beginning of his poetical period, 'a long and blessed interval, during which my natural faculties were allowed to expand and my original tendencies to develop themselves;—my fancy, and the love of nature, and the sense of beauty in forms and sounds.' This period was preceded and followed by 'abstruse researches' in metaphysics 'which exercised the strength and subtilty of the understanding without awakening the feelings of the heart.'

13, 14. Cf. *Genesis* I, 2. 'The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.'

II

Composed August 20, 1795, at Clevedon, Somersetshire. In this poem we see the same kind of 'panentheism' as Wordsworth expresses in *Lines composed above Tintern Abbey*.

1. *Sara*. In October 1795 Coleridge married at Bristol Sarah or Sara Fricker. The first few years of his married life were full of happiness in great contrast with the estrangement from his wife and with the mental struggles which were to follow. Compare this poem of 1795 with the ode *Dejection* of 1803, when already the clouds were settling down upon his spirit.

60. Coleridge, in a foot-note in his own edition, quotes a French writer who says of the atheist, 'he is cold to the most charming sight and he seeks a syllogism when I offer up a thanksgiving.'

III

The *friend* was probably Charles Lamb, an old school friend on very intimate terms, who thought this Coleridge's best sonnet (see Lamb's *Letters*, November 8, 1796).

IV

The *friends* were Charles and Mary Lamb, 'dear to my heart, yea, as it were my heart,' as Coleridge wrote in 1834, thirty-seven years later. Wordsworth was also there.

7. *springy*, explained by Coleridge as 'elastic'.

32. *calamity*. This refers to the tragedy of Lamb's life. In 1796 his sister Mary—the 'Bridget' of his *Essays*—in a sudden madness killed their mother. Lamb devoted his life to her care and comfort with loving self-sacrifice.

Coleridge died in July, Lamb in December, 1834.

V

These lines are taken from the description in *Osorio*, Act V, of a dungeon. 'This', says Coleridge,

> 'This is the process of our love and wisdom
> To each poor brother who offends against us.'

Coleridge was particularly attracted by Howard's attempts to alleviate the sufferings of prisoners and to introduce a more rational method of punishment. Cf.

> 'Sweet is the tear that from some Howard's eye
> Drops on the cheek of one he lifts from earth.'

VI

The Ancient Mariner was first printed in *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. It did not appear under Coleridge's name till 1817, when it was included in *Sibylline Leaves* and the marginal glosses were also, for the first time, published.

Of the origin of this poem Wordsworth tells us that 'in the autumn of 1797 he (Coleridge), my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon with a view to visit Linton

and the Valley of Stones, near to it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*. Accordingly we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of *The Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I suggested: for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, a day or two before, that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose', said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem.'

Afterwards it was found that the two authors worked on such different lines that a joint composition was impossible. Coleridge finished *The Ancient Mariner*, Wordsworth contributing a few lines, such as,

> 'And it is long, and lank, and brown,
> As is the ribbed sea-sand.'

Wordsworth proceeds, 'we began to think of a volume which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects.' Of this project, which resulted in *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge says 'It was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith.'

In Shelvocke (1726) we read that on the 'Speedwell' rounding Cape Horn, one Simon Hatley, second captain, shot a 'disconsolate black albatross' imagining 'from his colour that he might be some ill omen'.

VII

The 'celebrated poets' are Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. *Christabel* was not published till 1816 ,and meanwhile Sir John Stoddart repeated some of its stanzas to Scott, who adopted the metre in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805). Coleridge never finished *Christabel*, and in the opinion of his best critics the fragment is better unfinished. The theme of the poem is similar to that of *Comus*, with which it should be carefully compared. Virtue has power against all evil, and in virtue alone can human confidence rest. Sir Leoline is deceived by the outward beauty of the Lady Geraldine, but the innocence of Christabel and the guardian influence of her saintly mother protect her from the wiles of evil. In the conclusion Coleridge intended to resolve the difficulties, and show the Lady Geraldine baffled, the Baron reconciled, and Christabel happily united to her true lover. But it is doubtful whether this conventional 'happy ending' would have been effective. We are content to know, by many hints given to us, that Christabel will find safety and happiness at last.

VIII

15. *film*. 'In all parts of the kingdom these films are called "strangers" and supposed to portend the arrival of some absent friend.'—Coleridge.

54. From this line to the end we may compare Wordsworth's *Lines composed above Tintern Abbey* and *Three Years She Grew*.

IX

The Ode from which these lines are taken was published in the *Morning Post* in 1798. An editorial note says, 'The following excellent Ode will be in unison with the feelings of every friend to Liberty and foe to Oppression; of all who, admiring the French Revolution, detest and deplore the conduct of France towards Switzerland.'

This poem may be considered the recantation of Coleridge in politics. He had been, like Wordsworth, an ardent enthusiast for the ideas of liberty which seemed likely to be realized by the French Revolution. But in 1798 the French Republic engaged

in a war of aggression against the smaller Republic of the Swiss Cantons, and Coleridge came to the conclusion that

> 'The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
> Slaves by their own compulsion!'

True liberty, he perceived, is of the spirit, 'nor ever breathes her soul in forms of human power'.

X

This poem is also in the nature of a recantation. Coleridge had detested Pitt's policy of opposition to the French Republic, and had been led by that detestation into somewhat 'unfilial fears' of the soundness of his country. His sympathy with the Swiss, expressed in the previous poem, is now extended to his own native land.

223. *mansion of my friend*, i.e. of Mr. Poole, who had lent a cottage to Coleridge at Stowey.

XI

13. '*Most musical*, &c.' From Milton's *Il Penseroso*. Coleridge notes 'This passage in Milton possesses an excellence far superior to that of mere description; it is spoken in the character of the melancholy Man, and has therefore a *dramatic* propriety. The Author makes this remark, to rescue himself from the charge of having alluded with levity to a line in Milton; a charge than which none could be more painful to him, except perhaps that of having ridiculed his Bible.'

XII

For *the summer of the year 1797* Coleridge should have written *1798*, as is evident from the facts produced by Mr. E. H. Coleridge in his edition.

XIII

This is the poem referred to in the introduction to *Kubla Khan*.

XIV

This is an adaptation of a German poem, *Unsterblicher Jüngling*, by Count Stolberg. It was first published in 1834.

XV

These lines are an imitation of a German folk-song, and were sent in a letter from Coleridge at Göttingen to his wife, in 1799.

XVI

Dr. Carlyon says that these lines were written in the album of the inn on the Brocken, which Coleridge visited in 1799. Cf. next poem.

XVII

17, 18. Cf. 'We admire splendid views and great pictures, and yet what is truly admirable is rather the mind within us that gathers together these scattered details for its delight.'—R. L. Stevenson.

The same thought recurs in *Dejection*.

XVIII

Probably written in 1799. First published in 1799 as the *Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie*—a poem never completed.

XIX

Blencartha or Blencathara is a hill visible from the house in which Coleridge lived, near Keswick.

XXIII

The following note by Coleridge bears upon the ideas expressed in this ode: 'We have sufficiently distinguished the beautiful from the agreeable, by the sure criterion, that when we find an object agreeable, the *sensation* of pleasure always precedes the judgement and is its determining cause. We *find* it agreeable. But when we declare an object beautiful, the contemplation or intuition of its beauty precedes the *feeling* of complacency, in order of nature at least: nay, in great depression of spirits may even exist without sensibly producing it.'

Cf. Stevenson's essay *Ordered South* in *Virginibus Puerisque*.

120. Thomas Otway, dramatist (1652–85).

This ode is of a sad biographical value as expressing the poet's own perception that his poetical inspiration was being withdrawn from him, never to return. Cf. poems XXVII and XXVIII.

XXIV

First published in the *Morning Post*, 1802, when the following explanatory note preceded it:

'CHAMOUNI. THE HOUR BEFORE SUNRISE.

'Chamouni is one of the highest mountain valleys of the Barony of Faucigny in the Savoy Alps; and exhibits a kind of fairy world, in which the wildest appearances (I had almost said horrors) of Nature alternate with the softest and most beautiful. The chain of Mont Blanc is its boundary; and besides the Arve it is filled with sounds from the Arveiron, which rushes from the melted glaciers, like a giant, mad with joy, from a dungeon, and forms other torrents of snow-water, having their rise in the glaciers which slope down into the valley. The beautiful *Gentiana major*, or greater gentian, with blossoms of the brightest blue, grows in large companies a few steps from the never-melted ice of the glaciers. I thought it an affecting emblem of the boldness of human hope, venturing near, and, as it were, leaning over the brink of the grave. Indeed, the whole vale, its every light, its every sound, must needs impress every mind not utterly callous with the thought—Who *would* be, who *could* be an Atheist in this valley of wonders! If any of the readers of the *Morning Post* have visited this vale in their journeys among the Alps, I am confident that they will not find the sentiments and feelings expressed, or attempted to be expressed, in the following poem, extravagant.'

The poem is, in part, an expansion of a German ode by Friederika Brun, addressed to Klopstock.

XXIX

This poem appeared in *The Friend*, No. XIV, November 23, 1809. In a prose essay in the same number, Coleridge describes the same character, 'under the name which he went by among his friends and familiars, of Satyrane, the Idoloclast, or breaker of idols'. In the reprint by Pickering of *The Friend*, the editor, H. N. Coleridge, adds a note to this essay: 'The attentive reader will of course see that Satyrane is the author himself, and that this extract contains one of the many sketches of his own character, scattered throughout his writings'.

The lines do, indeed, apply all too well to the life of Coleridge.

For *Satyrane* cf. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, I, vi; and with the epitaph cf. Wordsworth's *Poet's Epitaph* (1799).

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